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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, February 6, 1933

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(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Porridge for Breakfast." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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The porridge of the Three Bears may have been oatmeal or graham mush or cooked rye. Goldilocks didn't say. We can be sure it was some kind of cooked cereal, for, you remember, the bears had gone out for a stroll to let their bowls of porridge cool. The story of the Three Bears is a very old story, a folk tale told in many countries from early times. And cooked cereal or porridge is a very old food, also a favorite in many countries from early times. We read of the "bag pudding" famous way back in the days of King Arthur's Court in England. Bag pudding was a hot cereal dish. Even in this country cooked cereal was an early food. The Indians taught the first settlers to use corn, an entirely new cereal to our ancestors. The porridge which they made they called "Indian pudding" or "hasty pudding." It was nothing more than cornmeal mush.

Of course, the modern grocery store presents a great array of cereals, many of them in attractive packages and prepared for immediate use with little or no cooking. Most of our prepared breakfast foods of today look very different from the earlier cereals which were merely coarsely cracked, parched grains cooked in water for hours. Some kind of cereal grain grows in every part of the world except the Arctic regions. And in all countries cereals are staple foods--you might call them the backbone of the diet of most nations. They not only make the porridge for breakfast and supper, but they also make the bread and countless other good, dependable dishes. The most common grains are wheat, corn, oats, and rice. Other grains used for food are barley, millet, rye, buckwheat and kaffir corn.

Why have cereals always been so popular and widely used? I can give you at least seven reasons. To begin with they are among our cheapest foods. Second, they are nutritious, excellent sources of calories as well as of other valuable nutrients. Third, they are easily prepared. Fourth, they are palatable--generally liked. Fifth, they are digestible--good for all ages. Sixth, they are dry, compact, and easy to keep. Seventh, they are easy to grow. In a word, cereals are a food bargain, and they're a most convenient food. The nutritionists say that cooked cereals are probably our cheapest source of energy. A thoroughly cooked cereal is one of the best possible breakfast foods, especially if it is one of the whole-grain varieties. Children as young as six months of age may begin eating cereal in strained form. Of course, no cereal alone will make a balanced diet. You need milk, fruits and vegetables to supply the protein, minerals and vitamins lacking. When vegetables and fruits are scarce and expensive or when you are planning a low-cost diet, whole cereals are a better choice than refined cereals. Whole cereals supply more protein and minerals as well as vitamin B.

So much for the advantages of cereals. Now about cooking them. No matter how good or how cheap a food is, it needs proper preparation and serving if the family is to eat and enjoy it. Few foods are as easy to cook as cereal. Yet even plain, old-fashioned porridge can come out of the kettle a lumpy, sticky, half-

cooked mass, or it can scorch on the bottom of the kettle and come out with a scorched taste. We can make a good guess that the Middle-Sized Bear was a good cook who prepared her porridge with care. Otherwise Goldilocks would never have eaten up a whole bowl of it. The youngster who turns up his nose at his morning oatmeal may have had unpleasant experiences with lumpy, sticky porridge.

We have to be careful not to overcook many foods, but we don't have to worry about this with cereals. They can stand long hours of slow cooking and be the better for it. Of course, many prepared cereals today are partly cooked in the factory so they only require a few minutes more at home. Plain, old-fashioned cereal of unprepared grains--which many of us still use, requires long cooking. The scientists recommend cooking cereal in boiling salted water or hot milk. The quantity of liquid you use depends on the kind of cereal. As for the salt, the general rule is **about** one teaspoon of salt for each quart of water. Now about those detestable lumps. How to avoid them? If you have a coarse cereal like rice or oatmeal, sprinkle it slowly in rapidly boiling water and stir it constantly with a fork for 10 minutes to be sure it doesn't stick together or burn on the bottom of the kettle. If you have a fine cereal, mix it with cold water first. Then pour it into boiling water and stir it constantly for ten minutes. After the first ten minutes of cooking directly over the fire, finish the cooking in a double boiler or a fireless cooker or a pressure cooker. By the way, dried fruits--dates, figs or raisins--make cereals extra good and add minerals and vitamins which children especially need. You can chop these fruits and add them to the cereal after the first ten minutes of cooking. Or you can serve the cereal with a sauce of stewed, fresh or dried fruit.

One more question. Mothers often ask whether children should or shouldn't have sugar on their morning porridge. Well, the specialists say it's better not to start children to thinking that porridge needs sugar. Sugar blunts the appetite for the milder flavor of the cereal and sugar in quantities is irritating to the digestive tract. One authority on nutrition says that putting sugar on cereal to get the cereal eaten is establishing the sugar habit and not the cereal habit. Good steaming hot porridge served with cream or whole milk and occasionally with dried fruit is a delicious food in itself.

Here's an inexpensive winter breakfast menu. Sliced oranges; Whole-grain wheat porridge served with cream or top milk; Raisin bread toast; Crisp bacon and Coffee.

Tomorrow: How to press wool garments.

